

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BUENOS 01986 222018 Z

72

ACTION ARA-17

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NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-14 USIA-12 RSR-01 /135 W
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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1390

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USCINCSO FOR POLAD

E. O. 11652: N/ A

TAGS: PINS, AR

SUBJ: ARMY OUSTS STRIKING POLICEMAN FROM LA PLATA HEADQUARTERS;
NATIONWIDE WAVE OF POLICE STRIKES CONTINUES

1. SUMMARY. LATE EVENING MAR 21 FIRST ARMY CORPS UNITS
EVICTED LAST OF AN ESTIMATED 5,000 STRIKING BUENOS AIRES
PROVINCIAL POLICEMEN FROM LA PLATA HEADQUARTERS FOLLOWING
TWELVE- HOUR OCCUPATION. NATIONWIDE WAGE AND BENEFIT DISPUTES
INVOLVING PROVINCIAL POLICE PERSONNEL CONTINUE DISPUTE GOA PROMISE
OF SUBSTANTIAL SALARY HIKE. END SUMMARY.

2. LATE EVENING MAR 21 ELEMENTS OF FIRST ARMY CORPS COMPLETED
EVICTED SOME 5,000 MUTINYING BUENOS AIRES PROVINCIAL
POLICEMEN FROM POLICE HEADQUARTERS IN PROVINCIAL CAPITAL OF
LA PLATA. ONE SOLDIER WAS KILLED AND SEVERAL OTHERS WOUNDED
BY GUNFIRE DURING OPERATION ACCORDING TO OFFICIAL COMMUNIQUE.
ARMY STATEMENT ISSUED AT MIDNIGHT ALSO ANNOUNCED THE ASSUMPTION
OF DUTIES AS POLICE CHIEF BY GOA- DESIGNATED INTERVENTOR,
COL JUAN MARCIAL CANEDI. PRESS REPORTS FURTHER INDICATE
THAT ONE CIVILIAN POLICE EMPLOYEE WAS KILLED AND ANOTHER
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PAGE 02 BUENOS 01986 222018 Z

UNIDENTIFIED PERSON WAS WOUNDED WHEN ARMY MOVED ON REBELS.

3. POLICE BUILDING HAD BEEN OCCUPIED SINCE MID- DAY BY STRIKING POLICEMEN WHO WERE DEMANDING THAT THEIR SALARIES AND OTHER BENEFITS BE BROUGHT IN LINE WITH FEDERAL POLICE WAGES AND ALLOWANCES ON A PERMANENT BASIS RETROACTIVE TO JAN 1. OCCUPATION WAS IN DEFIANCE OF A DEFENSE MINISTRY DECREE ISSUED YESTERDAY WHICH ORDERED A COMPLETE MOBILIZATION OF BUENOS AIRES PROVINCIAL POLICE FORCE AND THREATENED THOSE WHO DISOBEYED ORDER WITH PENALTIES TO BE METED OUT BY SPECIALLY-CREATED MILITARY COURTS.

4. SIMILAR DISPUTES OVER WAGES AND BENEFITS INVOLVING POLICE PERSONNEL HAVE BEEN REPORTED CURRENTLY IN PROVINCES OF CHUBUT, CORDOBA, MENDOZA, NEUQUEN. SAN JUAN, SANTA FE AND TUCMAN, AND ARE CONTINUING DESPITE INTERIOR MINISTER ARTURO MOR ROIG'S MAR 19 ANNOUNCEMENT OF A SUBSTANTIAL HIKE IN MINIMUM SALARY OF PROVINCIAL POLICE FORCES TO BE LARGELY SUPPORTED BY NATIONAL GOVERNMENT FUNDS. A MOBILIZATION ORDER FOR MENDOZA POLICE ELEMENTS WAS DECREED ON MARCH 20 AND IS BEING CARRIED OUT, REPORTEDLY WITH FEW EXCEPTIONS. A PRESS- REPORTED 1,500 ROSARIO POLICEMEN TOOK OVER THEIR HEADQUARTERS ON MAR 20 AND CONTINUE TO OCCUPY THE BUILDING. HOWEVER, IN CONTRAST TO LAST NIGHT'S LA PLATA OPERATION, SECOND ARMY CORPS UNITS HEADQUARTERED SOME 500 FEET FROM POLICE FACILITY HAVE MADE NO MOVE TO DATE TO OUST STRIKERS.

5. COMMENT. WAVE OF STRIKES POWERFUL INDICATION THAT LONG-SUFFERING PROVINCIAL POLICEMEN, WHO PUT LIFE ON LINE DAILY, NO LONGER WILLING TO TIGHTEN BELTS IN THE FACT OF CONTINUING

INFLATION, AND CHRONIC PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT BUDGETARY PROBLEMS. HOWEVER, THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT GOVERNMENT DECREED MOBILIZATIONS WILL NOT RESOLVE THESE DISPUTES AND HENCE THAT THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT WILL BE FORCED TO DIP FURTHER INTO ITS COFFERS TO SATISFY THE STRIKERS' DEMANDS. THE ONLY ALTERNATIVE WOULD APPEAR TO BE A COMPLETE ASSUMPTION OF LAW ENFORCEMENT DUTIES BY THE MILITARY, A DISTASTEFUL CHOICE. HEAVY- HANDED ACTION OF THE MILITARY IN LA PLATA REFLECTS POORLY ON GOVERNMENT PUBLIC IMAGE AND RESULTANT TENSIONS BETWEEN POLICE AND ARMED FORCES COULD ADVERSELY AFFECT INDISPENSABLE COOPERATION BETWEEN THE TWO INSTITUTIONS
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PAGE 03 BUENOS 01986 222018 Z

IN THE GOA'S FIGHT AGAINST SUBVERSION.

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